

AMERICANISM ESSAY CONTEST

Understanding This Year's Essay Theme Grades 3–4

“How can you be a beacon of light for our veterans?”

KEEPING IT SIMPLE

What does the question mean?

A beacon is a light that helps guide people. A lighthouse is one example. Being a “beacon of light” for a veteran means doing something that brings kindness, appreciation, encouragement, or friendship to a veteran.

Think about it

- Who is a veteran?
- Why should we thank and remember veterans?
- What is one thing YOU could do to make a veteran feel special or appreciated?
- How could a small act of kindness make a difference?

You could write about...

Writing a thank-you note • Visiting or talking with a veteran • Listening to a veteran's story • Helping a veteran • Taking part in Veterans Day activities • Learning about veterans • Showing respect for our country

Sentence starters

“To me, being a beacon of light means...”

“One way I can be a light for a veteran is...”

“I think this is important because...”

“I would want a veteran to know...”

Remember: There is no single right answer. Think about what being a light for a veteran means to YOU.

AMERICANISM ESSAY CONTEST

Understanding This Year's Essay Theme Grades 5–6

“How can you be a beacon of light for our veterans?”

UNDERSTANDING THE IDEA

What does “beacon of light” mean?

A beacon is a light that helps people find their way. In this essay, it is a way of describing how your actions can help a veteran feel appreciated, remembered, encouraged, or supported.

Think about it

- What have veterans done for our country?
- What sacrifices might they or their families have made?
- What can a young person do to show genuine appreciation?
- Why can small acts of kindness matter?

Possible directions

You might write about something you have done, something you would like to do, or an idea that schools and communities could use to support veterans.

Sentence starters

“When I hear the words ‘beacon of light,’ I think of...”

“Veterans deserve our appreciation because...”

“I can be a beacon of light by...”

“This would make a difference because...”

Remember: There is no single right answer. Think about what being a light for a veteran means to YOU.

AMERICANISM ESSAY CONTEST

Understanding This Year's Essay Theme Grades 7–8

“How can you be a beacon of light for our veterans?”

FROM KINDNESS TO ACTION

Look beyond the words

A beacon does more than shine. It can guide, encourage, reassure, and give hope. Think about how your actions could make a real difference in the life of a veteran.

Think about it

- What does a veteran give up or sacrifice through military service?
- What might a veteran need from a community after serving?
- What can students do—not just say—to show appreciation?
- How could your school, family, or community be a light for veterans?

Build your own idea

Choose one or more actions that matter to you. Explain WHY they would help. A strong essay can include a personal experience, an example, or a specific idea for making a difference.

Sentence starters

“Being a beacon of light for our veterans means more than simply saying ‘thank you’ because...”

“One way young people can make a difference is...”

“This matters to veterans because...”

“If more people did this, I believe...”

Remember: There is no single right answer. Think about what being a light for a veteran means to YOU.

AMERICANISM ESSAY CONTEST

Understanding This Year's Essay Theme Grades 9–10

“How can you be a beacon of light for our veterans?”

THINKING ABOUT SERVICE AND RESPONSIBILITY

Look deeper

The phrase “beacon of light” can represent gratitude, hope, encouragement, respect, and support. Consider what responsibility individuals and communities have toward those who have served.

Questions to consider

- What sacrifices do veterans make for others?
- What challenges can veterans face after military service?
- What does meaningful appreciation look like?
- How can young people support veterans in practical ways?
- What could schools and communities do better?

Develop your argument

Choose an idea you believe would make a meaningful difference. Explain your reasoning, give examples, and consider the effect your actions could have on veterans and on the people around you.

Sentence starters

“To me, being a beacon of light for veterans means...”

“Our responsibility to veterans should include...”

“One meaningful way I can help is...”

“The impact of this action could be...”

Remember: There is no single right answer. Think about what being a light for a veteran means to YOU.

AMERICANISM ESSAY CONTEST

Understanding This Year's Essay Theme Grades 11–12

“How can you be a beacon of light for our veterans?”

FROM GRATITUDE TO PURPOSE

Consider the bigger picture

A beacon of light can symbolize guidance, hope, recognition, and a reminder that someone is not forgotten. Consider what it means for a generation that has not served in the military to honor and support those who have.

Questions to consider

- What do veterans' sacrifices make possible for others?
- What responsibilities do citizens have toward veterans?
- What does genuine support look like beyond ceremonies and words?
- How can young people influence their schools and communities?
- What specific action could you take, and why would it matter?

Make your essay your own

You do not need to choose the biggest or most impressive idea. Choose something you believe in and explain it thoughtfully. Use examples, personal observations, or experiences to show why your idea would make a difference.

Possible openings

“A beacon of light is not simply a source of brightness; it is a source of...”

“When a nation asks its citizens to serve, it also creates a responsibility to...”

“I believe the most meaningful way I can be a beacon of light for veterans is...”

“Being a beacon of light requires more than gratitude because...”

Remember: There is no single right answer. Think about what being a light for a veteran means to YOU.